

Eve, Eric. *Writing the Gospels: Composition and Memory*. London: SPCK, 2016. xiv + 172 pp. Softcover. GBP 14.99.

Eric Eve is a theology fellow and tutor at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, where he specializes in New Testament theology. His previous book, titled *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* (London: SCPK, 2013), focused on the traditions that may have informed the authors of the Gospel as they wrote. In it, Eve focuses on the concepts of tradition, memory, and orality in the world of antiquity, for the purpose of making readers aware of anachronistic assumptions that may be held within classical form criticism.

Eve's latest book deals with compositional techniques of the Evangelists and is a contribution to composition criticism, providing an alternative to the dominant source criticism. It is an outgrowth of current orality, memory, and performance studies in the area of the New Testament. Eve emphasizes the use of the writers' own memory in the context of oral culture, as well as the collective memory of early Christianity which produced reputation-building accounts of Jesus as the community's hero, serving also to contribute to the community's identity. This book does not give final answers regarding the writing of the Gospels, but it broadens the readers' horizons and makes them aware of certain assumptions found in contemporary literature.

In his first chapter, Eve considers the process of reading and writing in New Testament times, quoting authors such as Hurtado, Botha, Gamble, Johnston, and Winsbury, among others. In the world of the first-century CE, oral performance was more valued than authorship. Publishing a text would mean performing it publically; thus, reliance on one's memory was more valued than reliance on written texts. A living witness who could perform orally, being questioned and cross-examined, had greater value for ordinary illiterate people who rarely had access to writings and regarded them as a sign of nobility and suspicion. Pointing to these insights, Eve makes a noteworthy effort to bring us nearer to the culture and circumstances of the Gospel writers.

In chapter two, Eve poses the question as to why one would write a Gospel at all? Interacting with Horsley, Kelber, Bauckham, Thatcher, and others, Eve points to several substantial reasons for writing, derived from the needs and situation of Christian believers in the first century. He sees the purpose of the Gospels as creating community identity. Thus, he asserts that the Gospels have both a formative and normative function; formatively, providing the story of origin of the Christian faith, and, normatively, guidance for the present situation. Therein, the Evangelists are promoting their specific answers, which solidify collective memory and strengthen communal identity.

With his third chapter, Eve comes to the question of the Evangelists' raw material. The primary assumption of source criticism is that Matthew copied certain parts of Mark's manuscript, however that is anachronistic, as shown in dialogue with Gregory, Rodriguez, and Finnegan. In ancient times, people relied more on memory and knew their written sources by heart. Oral tradition should be assumed as the *modus operandi* of the day, demonstrated by public performances including facial expressions, gestures, intonation, pacing, pausing, and similar oral techniques. A Gospel writer would not only be

influenced by writings, but even more so by oral performances of traditional material concerning Jesus, provided by eyewitnesses. Eve reminds the reader that everything a Gospel writer included had to be in harmony with existing Christians' collective memory, since none of the Evangelists would have been remembering in isolation.

Chapter four discusses three different models of composition thought to be available at that time: the authorial, the oral, and the scribal. Eve suggests that these are rather ideal types and that the Gospel writers may have been using different models or a mixture of the three. In any case, they would heavily rely on their own memory, as well as on collective memory. Authorship at that time was more of a collective effort than an individualistic project. Composition in performance before an audience would not have been unusual, and it entailed responsibility toward the collective memory of the audience.

In chapter five, Eve discusses memory and writing. After explaining how memory works through scripts and frames, Eve addressed, in chapter six, collective memory, being in conversation with Schwartz, Kirk, Thatcher, and Rodriguez, among others. Accordingly, the story of Jesus had to be told in the way that he was remembered and at the same time give orientation for the needs of the present, helping to form the community's identity. Once the Gospels were written, they would promote the reputation of Jesus and contribute to the collective memory of the church. With these observations on building a reputation, a community's identity, and collective memory, Eve offers a well-rounded account of possible general circumstances and challenges of the Christian communities by the time of the writing of the Gospels.

In chapter seven, Eve discusses the relationships between the Gospels, which is classically solved by source criticism through the literary relationships between them. With his discussion of composition, memory, and orality, it becomes clear that oral transmission and performance need to be taken into account if the discussion is not to be limited to our print-culture ideals. Eve does not want to deny any use of written sources, but he broadens the picture to fit the customs and circumstances of the first century, in which memory played a significant role in the composition of texts.

In Eve's conclusions of how the Gospels came about, he suggests a middle way between written culture and the overstatement of oral culture. He argues for a scribal model which takes into account the continuous interface between writing, speech, and memory, as well as the interchange of individual and communal composition. His default assumption for the Evangelists' use of previously-written material is usage largely through memory, promoting the reputation of Jesus as a community hero and shaping the identity of communities.

In my opinion, Eve has done a good job of exposing the reader to the broader context of the first century. In his chapters, Eve is constantly referring to various scholars and including differing opinions, thus engaging a wide variety of researchers without dismissing or purposely overlooking the alternatives. If the aim is a well-rounded account of the Gospel's beginnings, my

impression is that Eve has succeeded in offering a broad set of issues and topics which are important to consider.

Eve successfully brings into public discussion some major issues of current orality, memory, and performance studies, thus popularizing these fields of study and giving some necessary correctives to source and redaction criticisms. I believe Eve does well in protecting us from assumptions of our own print culture, which can heavily distort the picture of the first-century situation. This book is essential for students engaging in Gospel studies who want to familiarize themselves with a broad variety of current literature and relevant approaches, as well as for general readers who wish to be broadly informed about the circumstances and possibilities of the Gospel writing process.

Theologische Hochschule Friedensau
Möckern-Friedensau, Germany

IGOR LORENCIN

Fuller, Randall. *The Book That Changed America: How Darwin's Theory of Evolution Ignited a Nation*. New York: Viking, 2017. x + 294 pp. Hardcover. USD 27.00.

Darwin's theory of evolution had a powerful impact on science, philosophy, religion, politics, the arts, race relations, slavery, the Civil War, and just about every other aspect of life in the United States of America during the nineteenth century. That is the premise of Randall Fuller in *The Book That Changed America: How Darwin's Theory of Evolution Ignited a Nation*. Fuller writes as one who believes in evolution and its positive impact. Nonetheless, creationists can learn much about the far-reaching impact of Darwinism from this book.

Randall Fuller is Chapman Professor of English at the University of Tulsa, and has published a number of works, including *From Battlefields Rising: How the Civil War Transformed American Literature*, for which he was awarded Phi Beta Kappa's Christian Gauss Award for best literary criticism.

Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, just two years before the American Civil War began. Fuller traces the book's influence on key thinkers of the time and impact on the major issues of the day. These key thinkers include the botanist Asa Gray, the social reformer Charles Loring Brace, the abolitionist Franklin Sanborn, and the philosopher Henry David Thoreau.

In this short review, I will touch on only a few of the important intellectual arenas that were radically changed by Darwinism. One obvious area is religion and science. In 1859, many understood the study of nature as a quest to better understand God, who had created everything. Evolution created a pathway for embracing the rampant materialism of that day, and removing God from human understanding of the universe. Some eventually jettisoned the idea of God, and began to see nature as self-generating and self-sustaining. Others, like Gray, struggled to retain belief in God and yet accept much of the new theory.

According to Fuller, many abolitionists grasped Darwinism immediately as a way to combat slavery. Some creationists of the time taught that God had created each human race (Black, White, Indian, etc.) distinct from